



NAVY NEWS



Vol. 33/00

Forward ... from the Sea

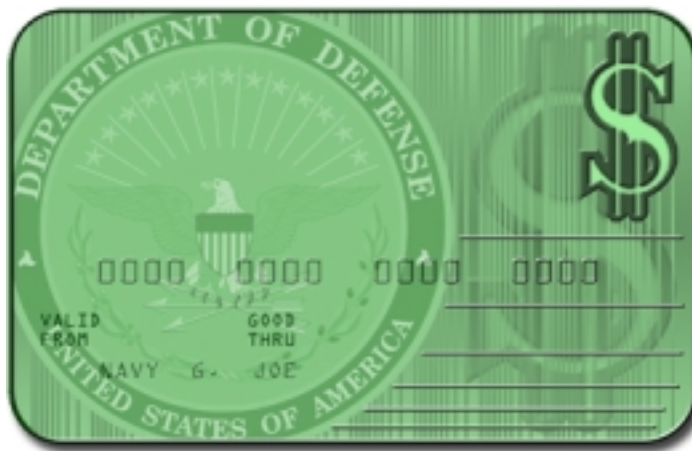
August 4, 2000

Department of Defense to establish subsistence plan

By the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (public affairs)

WASHINGTON (NNS) — Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen announced July 28 that the Department of Defense (DoD) intends to establish a subsistence plan. The subsistence plan, designed primarily for junior members of the armed forces, would establish a benefit for military members who now qualify for food stamps under eligibility criteria established by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) or who would qualify if the cash value of their off-base housing allowances was not counted.

The DoD's subsistence plan would provide eligible members with electronic debit cards containing a fixed monthly value based upon the member's pay grade and family size. Eligibility guidelines would generally



follow the USDA's food stamp guidelines with a few important exceptions. First, the value of housing allowance received by members living off-base would not count as income in determining eligibility or amount of benefit and second, the benefit would be administered on military installations, making access to

the benefit much easier than having to travel to the state office.

Also, the plan would ensure that service members assigned to remote locations, where commissaries are not available, are not disadvantaged solely by the location of their assignment. These members would be

reimbursed, upon presentation of food receipts, an amount equal in value to the benefit, which would have otherwise been provided through the use of the plan debit card.

The plan was developed to specifically address the food stamp eligibility issue of military members and to restore equity among members living either on or off military installations. It also addresses the need to improve the financial well being of many of our junior personnel, while providing an alternative benefit to those currently relying on public assistance in the form of food stamps.

The plan's benefit structure should serve as an incentive for individuals to

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USS Dwight D. Eisenhower F-14 crashes during routine training

By Naval Forces Central Command, 5th Fleet Public Affairs

USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, At Sea (NNS) — A pilot and a naval flight officer from USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) safely ejected from their F-14 Tomcat fighter during a training exercise over the Saudi Arabian desert July 26. The incident took place shortly after 10 a.m. local time. Both aviators were recovered in good health and have been transported by helicopter to the Taif Air Base in Saudi Arabia.

No additional damage was

caused on the ground and the incident is under investigation.

The Navy is withholding the names of the crew. The pilot is assigned to Fighter Squadron 11. The naval flight officer is assigned to USS Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Fighter Squadron 11 is one of two F-14 squadrons attached to Carrier Air Wing 7. Both the air wing and USS Dwight D. Eisenhower have been deployed to the Mediterranean Sea and Arabian Gulf since departing Norfolk, Va., February 18.



F-14 Tomcat
U.S. Navy photo

It's official! USS Essex joins the forward-deployed naval force

By Lt. Lisa Brackenbury, Amphibious Group 1 Public Affairs

SASEBO, Japan (NNS) — Beneath a sea of signal flags, Sasebo and San Diego Sailors watched with mixed emotions as their respective commanding officers made the Navy's fourth and largest hull swap official during a formal Exchange of Command ceremony on July 26 in the hangar bay of USS Essex (LHD 2).

In front of more than 200 Sailors, several military and civilian guests, as well as the U.S. 7th Fleet band, Capt. Tom Parker turned over command of USS Belleau Wood (LHA 3) to Capt. Robert Gilman and Gilman turned over command of Essex to Parker. The ceremony was an important milestone in the hull swap, marking the date for the San Diego crew to move aboard and start work on Belleau Wood and vice versa for the Sasebo crew aboard Essex.

The historic ceremony's guest speaker was Rear Adm. Paul S. Schultz, who took over as commander, Amphibious Force, U.S. 7th Fleet on June 21. Schultz not only thanked both crews for their hard work and long hours, but also acknowledged what is probably the most challenging aspect of completely turning over a ship to another crew.

"When you're the crewmember of a warship, that ship becomes 'your' ship," said Schultz, a career surface warfare officer. "You start referring to it with the same fondness as a high school sweetheart. This is a very difficult concept to understand until you have lived aboard a ship for a long time, gone into combat or even battled a typhoon at sea ... then it becomes perfectly clear."

Schultz continued, "I realize that it's not easy leaving a ship you have a significant attachment to, but both crews are doing this with the professionalism that they, and indeed all U.S. Navy Sailors, are so well known for."

Schultz gave extra praise to the San Diego crew for bringing Essex to Japan in such fine condition.

"Essex looks absolutely fantastic and Capt. Gilman, I commend you and your crew both for bringing the ship here in great shape, but for also doing an outstanding job during the swap. I know it hasn't been easy," added Schultz.



USS ESSEX (LHD 2)
U.S. Navy photo

Rotating ships into and out of Japan is necessary in order to provide the most up-to-date capabilities for forces in the forward-deployed environment. Sasebo set the standard for successful hull swaps last summer when the former San Diego-based USS Juneau (LPD 10) traded places with USS Dubuque (LPD 8) in the Navy's first-ever one-for-one replacement hull swap.

Belleau Wood has been forward deployed to Sasebo since 1992. The San Diego crew will return the ship — known affectionately as the "Big Dawg" by its former crew and Sasebo locals — to the states later this summer.

"Our forward-deployed naval forces operate in an extremely tough and dynamic environment," said Schultz. "Because of our mission here, we have to maintain our ships in the absolute highest state of readiness. We don't have the luxury of taking a ship out of commission for a year or 18 months for extensive rehab work. Belleau Wood, for example, was underway more than 200 days last year, participating in multi-international exercises and responding to contingencies like their no-notice deployment to East Timor."

"Being away from port that much leaves little time for long-term maintenance," added Schultz. "After eight years of this kind of pace, it's time to send Belleau Wood back home."

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participate in the DoD plan rather than the food stamp program, since many would receive a benefit for which they would not have previously qualified and others would receive a roughly comparable benefit. An additional benefit for those who may have been using food stamps in local grocery stores would be the significant savings of approximately 26 percent gained by shopping in the commissary. This would have a direct and measurable effect in increasing the discretionary income of some of our most junior enlisted men and women with families.

"The subsistence plan is the right thing to do for our men and women in uniform," Cohen said. "It addresses inequities in current programs and continues the steps started last year with enactment of increased pay raises and changes to retirement benefits. These measures directly improve the standard and quality of living that our service members deserve. Of paramount importance is the ability to attract and retain the quality force on which our nation has come to rely. This new step is consistent with that goal and shows that the Department of Defense takes care of its own."

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Navy Exam Center offers exam ordering online

By Journalist Senior Chief(AW) Jon Gagne, Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center

PENSACOLA, Fla. (NNS) — The Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center (NETPDTC) at Saufley Field in Pensacola, Fla., has announced the start of a new program that will not only make ordering Navy advancement exams easier, but also allow ordering commands to track the status of their orders throughout the process.

So far, only a small percentage of Educational Services Offices (ESOs) throughout the Navy are already taking advantage of the new program and enjoying the benefits.

There are several advantages to ordering exams online instead of through the mail or by Navy message. First, ordering online is incredibly fast. Second, commands can process and track the status of their orders

throughout the entire process by simply checking the NETPDTC Navy Advancement Center web site. Third, commands that are deploying or completing deployment may have the option of getting exams shipped directly to the command or the nearest continental United States (CONUS) Personnel Support Detachment (PSD) (including Hawaii and Alaska), providing they coordinate with the PSD ahead of time.

Jim Hawthorne, the Branch Head who oversees the new program at the Navy Advancement Center at Saufley Field, says this is a "win-win" situation for the Navy.

"We're estimating a turnaround time of two weeks from the time we receive the requests from stateside commands, process the orders and get them back to them,"



Hawthorne said. "Overseas commands will take a little longer to get their orders, but it will still be much faster than before."

Once a command ESO logs on to the Navy Advancement Center web site to enroll in the program, they will be assigned a password (one password per unit identification code) and

receive easy-to-follow instructions that guide them through the registration process. Then, they simply submit their orders.

All incoming correspondence is validated twice a week by a three-person team that oversees the operation.

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New ESO training course announced

By the Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center

PENSACOLA, Fla. (NNS) — The Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center (NETPDTC) at Saufley Field in Pensacola, Fla., has announced a new program that will soon be available online for all Educational Services Officers (ESOs).

This nonresident training course, designed by NETPDTC for the Chief of Naval Education and Training (CNET), covers information for the men and women of the U.S. Navy and Naval Reserve preparing to serve as Educational Services Officers.

The course provides subject

matter on various educational programs. Some of the information covered includes educational services officer fundamentals, the Navy College Program, educational programs and benefits, professional development and education programs and the Navy Enlisted Advancement System (NEAS).

Personnel may contact the NETPDTC web site to download the course, but will not receive credit for completion until they complete an end-of-course exam. Course and end-of-course exams are only available at www.cnet.navy.mil/netpdtc/nac/neas.htm



USS McFaul gets more technology into the palms of Sailors

By SURFLANT Public Affairs



NORFOLK, Va. (NNS) — Sailors aboard the Norfolk-based guided missile destroyer USS McFaul (DDG 74) are being given new, high-tech tools to assist them in their day-to-day work.

Beginning in early August, 115 Palm V hand-held computers will be issued to the crew and a series of Clarinet Systems infrared ports will be installed throughout the ship to link them all together.

That's good news for Sailors aboard the ship and represents an expansion of an existing program. Earlier this year, more than 2,000 Palm computers were distributed to officers stationed aboard Atlantic Fleet surface combatants. On McFaul, the

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Linda Boffa, an exam-ordering clerk, said that checking the status of orders is simple.

"By logging on and entering their passwords, they will know the date we received their orders at NETPDTC, the date we processed their orders and shipped them out," Boffa said. "We'll even know the name of the person who received it."

Shipments to CONUS commands, including Hawaii and Alaska, are sent via Federal Express. Overseas commands and deployed units will receive their orders by "Registered Mail" through the (FPO) U.S. Post Office.

Ed West, section supervisor, is enthusiastic about the new program. "This is the smart way to do business," he explained.

Besides being very user-friendly, the process is quick and reliable. According to West, only about 25 percent of Navy ESOs are presently taking advantage of the online service. That number will grow, West said, as more and more command ESOs become aware of the program and register.

For more information, go to the web address neasos.cnet.navy.mil/CGI-BIN (CGI-BIN must be all caps).

Essex, con't. from pg. 2

By maintaining Sailors in their original homeports, the Navy eliminated the need to uproot families from their homes, schools and churches to move them overseas or back to the states. This also helps to retain high readiness levels by keeping area-specific expertise in San Diego and Sasebo, respectively.

"Sailors and their families are the backbone of the U.S. Navy," continued Schultz, "and this method of hull swap makes taking care of our people more than just a cliché. It negates the need to uproot upwards of 1,000 families and keeps those who prefer their original homeports where they want to be."

Since Essex and the San

Diego crew arrived in Sasebo June 13, both crews have been working long hours, seven days a week, to ensure the swap is completed safely and on time. In addition to the normal, daily routine of life aboard a ship, San Diego and Sasebo Sailors have been teaching each other the distinctive aspects and features of their ships, as well as conducting numerous and vitally important damage control training evolutions.

Although both are multi-purpose amphibious assault ships, Belleau Wood is of the older Tarawa class and Essex, commissioned in 1992, is the second ship in the newer Wasp class. As a result of design improvements, the interior configurations are slightly different, which means that work spaces, repair lockers and

damage control equipment, berthing spaces and even the mess decks are located in different places. Both crews had to learn their way around completely new ships in just a matter of days.

"I encourage both crews to take your 'new' ships and make them your home," concluded Schultz. "Learn the nuances of each, and above all, keep everything safe."

Throughout the next few weeks, both ships will undergo fast cruises, crew certifications and safe-to-steam assessments, just to ensure the respective crews are fully ready to take over their "new" ships.

More information about the Essex/Belleau Wood hull swap can be found at www.essex.navy.mil/hullswap.htm.

Palms, con't. from pg. 4

115 new hand-held computers will be distributed to chiefs and Sailors in work center supervisor positions; that's in addition to the 30 issued to the wardroom earlier this year.

In addition to the Palm V's standard features, the computers issued to Sailors will include a new security software package called "Restrictor," developed by IS/Complete, Inc. The software will require a "log on" ID and authentication password to protect business sensitive notes and contact information on the computers in case they are lost or misplaced.

But what makes this technological expansion aboard McFaul special is the installation of 32 Clarinet Systems infrared ports throughout the ship. These ports will be positioned in work centers and key, high-traffic areas such as berthing spaces and mess decks. Connected to a Clarinet Systems EthIR LAN (local area network), they allow Sailors to transmit and receive information between the network and their hand-held computers anytime from almost anywhere on the ship.

McFaul Sailors will initially use the Palms to send and receive e-mails, coordinate daily and weekly schedules and consolidate and coordinate checklists and databases. As the crew grows more familiar with the computers, they will find more uses

for them. The end goal is to continue improving productivity and efficiency.

"Imagine all the functions performed by Sailors where in the past they needed a clipboard. This upgrade helps to eliminate the need for those clipboards and all the pieces of paper that went along with them," said Kenneth Whitehead of Aether Systems, the company that designed the software that brings the Palms, the infrared nodes, and the ship's existing intranet together.

This program is just another step in the Navy's ongoing commitment to improving efficiency by quickly getting new equipment to the people who can best put it to use: Sailors on the waterfront.

"This is what it's all about: putting technology into the hands of Sailors to not only increase combat readiness but to enhance their quality of service," commented Vice Adm. Henry C. Giffin III, shortly before turning over responsibilities as commander of the Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. "As we build the Navy of the future, we have to look for new and innovative ways of doing business and I think this is a significant step in building the 21st Century Navy."

More information about USS McFaul can be found at www.spear.navy.mil/ships/ddg74.

On Navy/Marine Corps News

Look for the following stories and more on next week's show:

- A new Korean War exhibit opens at the Pentagon;
- USS Essex and USS Belleau Wood Sailors swap ships;
- See how Marines in Virginia train for night operations during the day;
- Cybersailor "disappears" but, recovered video helps solve the mystery.

Compiled on tape #2000-32, the show is on its way to the fleet now.

This week in naval history: August 6, 1945

Captain W.S. Parsons, a Navy weaponeer aboard the B-29 Bomber Enola Gay, armed the atomic bomb that was dropped over the Japanese mainland city of Hiroshima. The weapon exploded with the force of over 20,000 tons of TNT.

A second atomic device was detonated over Nagasaki on Aug. 9. Over 100,000 were killed.

Japan finally surrendered on Aug. 14, ending World War II.

Visit the Naval Historical Center web site at www.history.navy.mil for more information about naval history.

**Submarine Centennial history: Aug. 7, 1897**

John P. Holland launches Plunger, a steam powered submarine. Three years later, he would build the first internal combustion, gasoline-powered submarine, the Holland VI.

For additional Centennial information and events, visit the Navy home page at www.navy.mil and click on "Submarine Centennial."



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